AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (Currently Amended)   A computer-implemented method for managing an investigation case, the method comprising:

    a) receiving a case from a client;

    b) receiving from the client a list of at least one preferred investigator;

    c b) assigning an investigator to the case, the step of assigning including:

    selecting the investigator from a the list of at least one preferred investigator investigators, each investigator from the list of preferred investigators being identified by the client as preferred,

    calculating a budget for the case, and

    sending notification to the investigator requesting acceptance of the assignment to the case, and

    receiving acceptance from the investigator; and

    d e) managing the case on behalf of the client and the investigator by a case manager.

2-18   (Canceled)

19.   (Currently amended) A method for initiating private investigation services, including:

    providing a web server for storing and control logic for maintaining: a client database, an investigator database, a case database and a geographic database;

    receiving client information and case information at the web server from at least one client computer, the case information including a list of at least one preferred investigator;

    receiving investigator information at the web server from at least one investigator computer;

    storing the client information, the case information and the investigator information in the client database, the case database and the investigator database, respectively; and

    analyzing the client information, the investigator information, the case information and information stored in the geographic database to determine a match between the an investigator and the case; and

    assigning the investigator to the case based on the step of analyzing.

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20.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 19 wherein the step of receiving case information includes receiving a case type profile indicating that the case is a reviewed case.

21.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 further including:

receiving budgeted time and expense data from a case manager;

receiving actual time and expense data from the investigator;

storing and comparing the budgeted time and expense data to the actual time and expense data; and

automatically approving the actual time and expense data if they are less than the budgeted time and expense data.

22.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 19 wherein the step of receiving case information includes receiving a case type profile indicating that the case is a live case.

23.   (Currently amended)   The method of claim 22 wherein the step of analyzing includes selecting the investigator from a the list of at least one preferred investigator investigators.

24.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 19 further including enabling direct communication between the client and the investigator.

25.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 22 wherein the step of analyzing includes selecting the investigator.

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